

A government report of November 29, 1848 declined to accept the resignation of the Commissioners and expressed regret that the Commissioners had not been satisfied with the government's previous decision in its attempt to effect a certain rapprochement between them and the current Medical Superintendent, Dr. George Hamilton Park. Perhaps inevitably, the government indicates its willingness to accept Dr. Park's resignation instead. That he resorted to language even after such a defeat, fighting on with words to which the mere existence of his text attests, suggests the great importance which he must have attached to language and textual authority. He must have understood how much what he wanted to do at the empirical level depended on establishing his authority on the level of signification as a writer; otherwise, he might not have written so much so well.⁴⁵

A related reason for his literary exertions was the impression of his character that he believed the permanent, written record would leave to posterity -- and that he sensed would be his principal remembrance (as indeed it was). Dr. Park knew that his ethos was repeatedly under attack in the "Minutes" of the Temporary Asylum, even when he did right. The dilemma the Commissioners placed him in when they sought his permission to release the Assistant Steward, a medical student named Mr. J. Cronyn, to absent himself from the perennially understaffed Asylum to attend Medical Lectures at University College, could stand for his whole term of office: "If I acquiesced, it was doing wrong; if I dissented, I incurred ... fresh hostility" (Narrative, 40).

Finally in his war or words Dr. Park found himself, albeit disingenuously considering his textual prowess, at a continual disadvantage, partly because as a doctor he depended on his reputation for his living as well as his honour, but more because of the nature of the textual exchange between himself and the Commissioners and indeed of the texts themselves. As he pointed out, the Commissioners observed no standards or criteria for sifting the evidence for the assertions and insinuations they continually make against him. They even accepted and recorded the evidence of discharged employees, without reservation or qualification. This unsifted material was transmitted to the government, another textual authority, where it became a permanent part of the written record, of the Journal of the Legislative Assembly for example, or more generally of the archive about which Dr. Park expressed his greatest concern: